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## **Does Placement Type Matter? Comparing the Well-Being of Care-Experienced Young Adults in Northern Ireland**

Fargas, M., & McSherry, D. (2018). *Does Placement Type Matter? Comparing the Well-Being of Care-Experienced Young Adults in Northern Ireland*. Poster session presented at XV Conference of the European Scientific Association on Residential and Family Care for Children and Adolescents (EUSARF), Porto, Portugal.

### **Document Version:**

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

### **Queen's University Belfast - Research Portal:**

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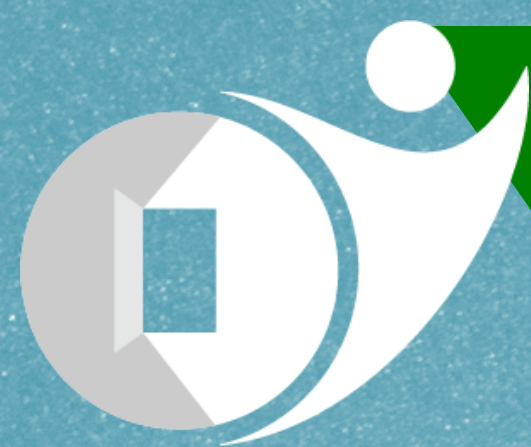
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# Does placement type matter?

## Comparing the well-being of care-experienced young adults in Northern Ireland



QUEEN'S  
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BELFAST

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Care Pathways and Outcomes  
The teens & early adulthood

### THE STUDY

This is a longitudinal study that has been following all the 374 children who were in care and under 5 years old on 31st March 2000 in Northern Ireland. It aims to compare how these young people (now aged 18 to 23) get/got on in their different types of placement. It also seeks to explore what other factors help or hinder their life chances and their general well-being.



SO FAR, 48 young people and/or their foster/adoptive/kinship parents/carers have taken part



- 13 in foster care
- 7 in kinship foster care
- 14 adopted (1 by a family member)
- 11 Residence Orders (4 by family)
- 3 lived with birth parents

### PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH



85%

were described by their parents/carers to be in a very healthy or healthy overall state of health (41 out of 48)

The adoptive parents of 3 (out of 14 adopted young people) described their state of health as not very healthy/unhealthy. The same was true for 2 young people that were/had been in long-term foster care, & 2 others in long-term kinship care.



33%

were suffering from a long-standing illness or disability (16 out of 48)

These were 8 adopted young people, 5 who had been/were in long-term foster care, 2 who had been subject of a RO, and one who had been living with a birth parent.



35%

were having/had behavioural problems (17 out of 48) (for 10, it was a current issue) according to their parents/carers

These were 4 adopted young people, 8 who had been/were in long-term foster care, 2 in long-term kinship care, and 2 who had been subject of a RO.



4

young people had been diagnosed with autism (out of 48)

These were 2 adopted young people, 1 who had been/were in long-term foster care, and 1 who had been subject of a RO.



38%

were suffering/had suffered from depression and/or anxiety (18 out of 48) (for 13, it was a current issue) according to their parents/carers

These were 6 adopted young people, 4 who had been/were in long-term foster care, 4 in long-term kinship care, 3 who had been subject of a RO, and one who had been living with a birth parent.



31%

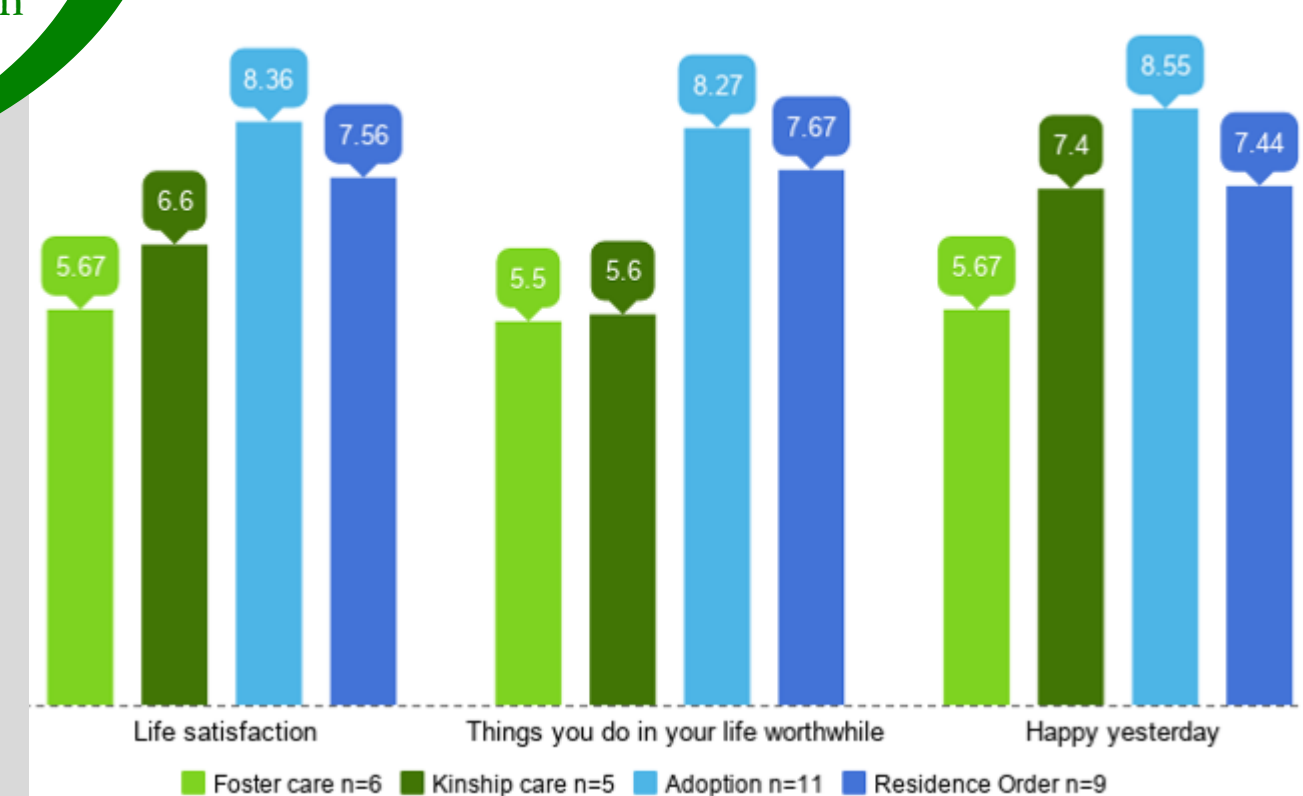
ever self-harmed, suicidal thoughts or attempted suicide (15 out of 48)

These were 4 adopted young people, 3 who had been/were in long-term foster care, 4 in long-term kinship care, 3 who had been subject of a RO, and one who had been living with a birth parent.

### SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING

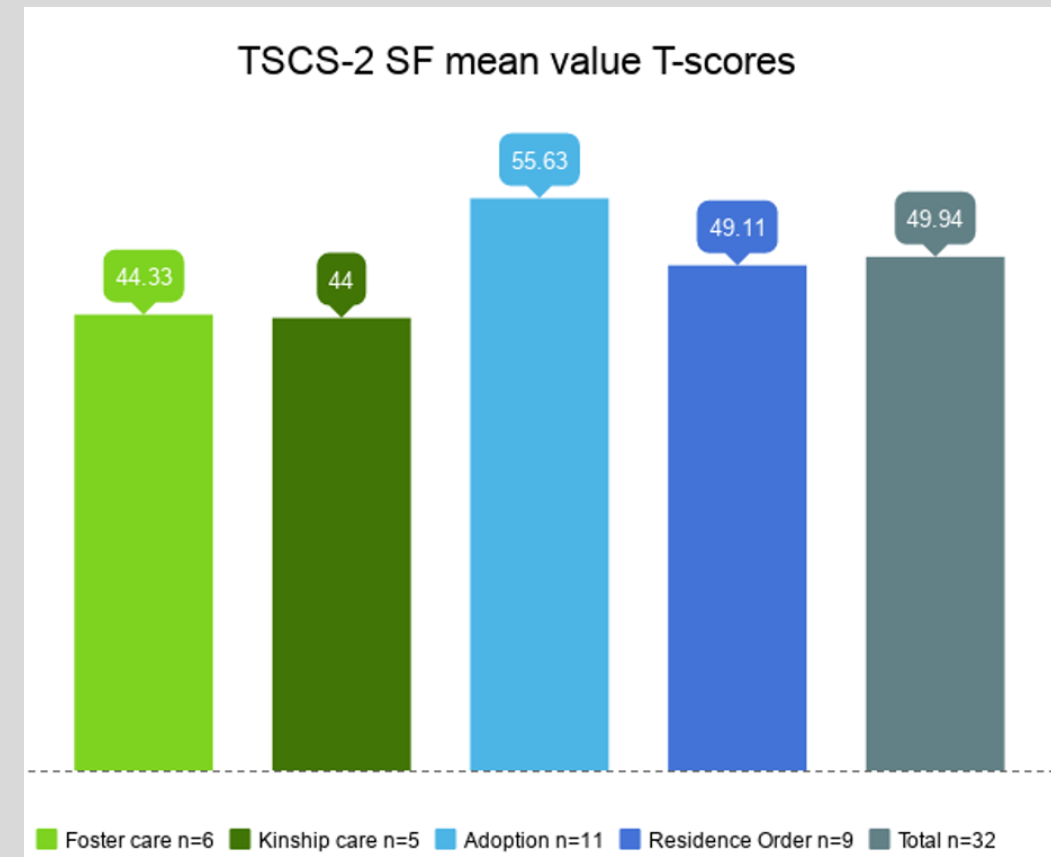
Young people were asked how satisfied they were with their life nowadays (0-10) (mean=7.41), and to what extent they felt things they did in their lives were worthwhile (0-10) (mean=7.22). Adopted young people had a larger mean score than young people in other placement types.

Mean values for each placement type



### SELF-CONCEPT

Tennessee Self-Concept Scale  
Second Edition Short Form



T-scores of 40 or below are considered low. Individuals with low scores are doubtful of their own worth. Seven out of 32 (22%) that completed the questionnaire had low T-scores (3 foster care, 2 kinship care, one adopted and one subject to RO).

### CONCLUSIONS

The concept of wellbeing is very complex, and has been defined in a range of ways. According to Dodge et al. (2012), it is about having the psychological, social and physical resources needed to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge. Here, the resources we have focused on are some health dimensions, self-concept and life satisfaction, although this study is exploring a range of others (e.g. social support).

Because of the yet small numbers of participants, it is difficult to draw confident conclusions. Most young people in the study are showing good levels of wellbeing (based on these dimensions), but there is a proportion that struggled in the past, with a few (still) struggling now. Placement type does not appear to be the main force behind any differences in wellbeing. While more young people in certain placement types appear to enjoy higher levels of life satisfaction or self-worth (i.e. adoption), the differences are too small. Also, in other respects, some young people in these same placements are showing difficulties, particularly in terms of mental health. A range of challenges are appearing to be tipping the balance of wellbeing. These include bullying, bereavement of close relatives/friends, unemployment, and family rejection. On the other hand, some factors are having a positive impact, including sense of belonging to a family, becoming a parent, support from friends and family, paid work, and therapeutic support.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO KNOW MORE

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Wave Four has been  
funded by the ESRC